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Elliott, Howard

The Harvard spirit of  
service

[Cambridge, Mass.]

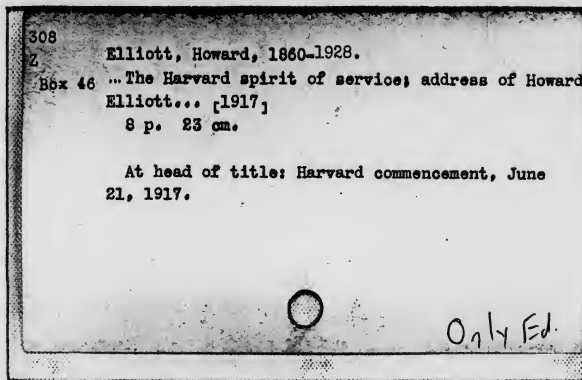
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JUL 11 1917

**HARVARD COMMENCEMENT**

**JUNE 21, 1917**

**The Harvard Spirit of Service**

Address of

**HOWARD ELLIOTT '81**

President of the

**HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

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GRADUATES:

This is your Day—this is Harvard's Day. We who believe in and love Harvard know that it is one of the Nation's Days, and now it is the Allies' Day! The first commencement at Harvard was in 1642, when nine men received degrees. From then until to-day, when 1,225 were conferred Commencement has been celebrated 275 times and 45,948 men have received degrees. There are now living 26,918 holders of Harvard degrees.

A degree from Harvard is precious, and the holder of it must remember always that it imposes upon him a great moral obligation; an obligation to so act and live that he will increase the power, reputation and usefulness of Harvard, and so that by no act or word shall he bring disgrace to Harvard or to the country.

The thousands who have received their Harvard degrees "commenced" their real life work with them. They have given much service and have been a great moral and constructive force in making the nation. They have been loyal and patriotic and have given their lives in defence of right and justice and to save the country.

Memorial Hall and the tablets there tell of the moral courage, self denial, and willingness to die in support of a just cause. They represent the true Harvard Spirit of Service.

To lay down one's life in defence of one's country so that its institutions and ideals may be preserved and improved is a noble act of service.

The moral and physical conflicts of war are terrible; yet they are often spectacular and appeal to the imagination and enthusiasm of the citizen. They open the door quickly to active work for the country and possibly

to undying fame. That the people of the United States, and Harvard graduates will perform again this service in defence of the nation, its moral life, its honor and integrity is a statement that cannot be doubted. If there is doubt, it will indicate that the ideals of the people have changed and in that event more responsibility than ever before rests upon Harvard Graduates and all educated men to have the moral courage to stand for the right.

On the other hand the every day work in time of peace is as important as to fight in time of war, and requires the same moral courage and high sense of duty. This may mean, and often does mean, severe drudgery, demanding patience and self denial and the giving of service that may seem without results or appreciation.

The great conflicts of the past are over, and graduates of Harvard must help to solve rightly many present and future problems which promise to be more complicated and pressing than those of other days—this, because of the dislocation of human relations throughout the world.

"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Wealth has accumulated in a marvelous manner in this country and the annual increment will continue to be great.

But men will *not* decay if moral courage and the spirit of service is displayed by the thousands of Harvard graduates and by the men from other colleges in the land.

Think of the wonderful growth and development of the country since Harvard was founded, and particularly in the last fifty years! Great as that growth has been, the next twenty-five years—the next fifty—will be even more wonderful and more critical in the history of this country.

The opportunity for service will never be greater—service to self, to family, to country, to morality, and to humanity.

The late John J. Ingalls, of Kansas, in a famous sonnet, makes "Opportunity" say:

"Master of human destinies am I!  
Fame, love and fortune on my footsteps wait.  
Cities and fields I walk; I penetrate  
Deserts and seas remote, and passing by  
Hovel and mart and palace, soon or late  
I knock unbidden once at every gate!  
If sleeping, wake; if feasting, rise before  
I turn away. It is the hour of fate,  
And they who follow me reach every state  
Mortals desire, and conquer every foe  
Save death; but those who doubt or hesitate,  
Condemned to failure, penury and woe,  
Seek me in vain and uselessly implore,  
I answer not, and I return no more!"

This limitation to opportunity must not be accepted by Harvard men. It would be discouraging to the young men of the country if it were true that opportunity comes only once. This is a time filled with opportunities for the alert and patriotic man.

But it is essential that the relation of the government to all human activities shall be so adjusted that initiative will not be killed and the individual may have full opportunity to obtain and retain the benefits of his brains and industry, and yet be restrained from doing harm to others.

The educated man must take part, a more active part, in framing and executing the laws of the land. He must not leave this work so largely to those whose ambitions at times are at variance with the real needs of the people, or to the reformer who is carried away by enthusiasm and has little practical knowledge wherewith to support his contentions.

Sectionalism, based on diverse economic interests and views, should not be allowed to create discord in this beautiful land of ours. Class feeling should not be

developed and all should do their part, realizing that only a few can be generals and that most of us must be privates whose faithful work, however, often wins the battle although the world may not applaud.

The working out of a plan to settle international disputes in some orderly manner and without war, just as business quarrels are settled, is a world question that must be determined.

The great question of the fair division of the annual increment of wealth between those who work with the hands and those who have created and own the plant or enterprise must be answered.

The wonderful material resources of this country must be conserved. The capabilities and responsibilities of our vast population of many different races must be developed and established for the benefit of posterity.

The educated man should set an example of high moral courage, hard work and sane and simple living—and this example should be a check upon idleness, waste and extravagance, personal and national—practices which with our growing population retard the progress of the nation.

These matters of national importance will be solved correctly in the long run—but time is an important element. As other great questions were solved in the past by force and untold suffering, as the mysterious problems of Europe are now being settled, so some of our problems may have to be similarly determined. Of what use, though, are education and training and Christianity if we cannot give heed to our difficulties *before* the crisis comes, and by proper study and consideration overcome them without war, riot and suffering?

Everyone can do something to create a sound public opinion that will insist upon a just and peaceful settlement of questions like these.

To give of time and talent and moral force for this laudable purpose is a duty that every Harvard man owes to his college and his country.

#### THE HARVARD FOUNDATION.

There is one immediate and pressing service that every graduate should give to Harvard. It is to contribute to and support the Harvard Foundation. This is a plan to raise \$10,000,000. The Marshall of the Day, Thomas W. Lamont, is the inspiring head of the Committee of the Alumni who has charge of the movement. He is giving unselfishly of his time, talent and money to obtain this amount in the shortest possible time. He and his committee should have the moral and financial support of every Harvard graduate.

The amount proposed is none too large if Harvard is to hold its place as a great national and world asset. This is most necessary now because some of the great Universities of Europe from which we have received so much in men and knowledge have been crippled by the war. Upon Harvard and all American Universities will rest the responsibility of carrying on their work and of furnishing scholars and investigators and the moral force of the educated man.

Individually, when we are sick we try to have the best doctor; when we go to law, the best lawyer; when we have a difficult problem of any kind, the best advice. Shall we not give to the young men at Harvard the very best of teachers and facilities?

To do this we must relieve the teaching staff of all anxiety over the present and future welfare of themselves and their families and we must pay salaries and furnish equipment sufficient to attract and hold the best brains of the country—and adjusted properly to the very important work that they are doing.

Harvard must be strong financially to give the highest service to the country, and her graduates must help her. Each one can give something and the payments can be spread over a number of years.

#### GRADUATES:

We are to-day facing conditions such as the United States and the World have never seen before.

We are face to face with great opportunities and are taking part in great movements that will affect the history of the United States and of the World—and the welfare of our children and of all who come after us.

Our degrees mean that not only are we educated men, but that we have a responsibility as men and citizens to stand for the Right—and against the destruction of Justice and the trampling down of Civilization—to give service, service to the community in which we live in addition to that which is necessary for the care of ourselves and our families. We and all educated men owe this service to our country so that it shall never be said that this great experiment in government failed because of the lack of moral courage and the incompetency of its citizens.

Graduates, we are meeting to-day as participants in the greatest war the world has ever known. We have cast our lot with our Allies, some of whom are represented here in person and all by their National Flags. We will win this battle for humanity and civilization, but the way will be long and the fight hard. Harvard will do its share and give a maximum of service.

As we stand under our flag and the flags of the Allies let us renew our faith in the ultimate sanity and civilization of the world and say with Longfellow:

“Look not mournfully into the past, it comes not back again; wisely improve the present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart.”

**END OF  
TITLE**